ANNALS OF IOWA

THIRD SERIES

VOLUMES I—VIII
APRIL, 1893—JANUARY, 1909

CHARLES ALDRICH, EDITOR

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DES MOINES, IOWA
HISTORICAL DEPARTMENT OF IOWA
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PREFACE

ORIGIN OF THE HISTORICAL DEPARTMENT OF IOWA.

In the first biennial report, 1893, Charles Aldrich, founder and curator of the State Historical Department of Iowa, detailed its origin and purpose in the following language:

Need for the Department. At the capitals of most states collections of the data for their own history, and that of surrounding regions, have been in progress for many years—in some from their first organization. Wisconsin, the model western state in this regard, has been engaged in this work fifty years. Kansas for nearly half that period. Possibly a like effort might have been instituted at the capital of Iowa, but the founding of the State Historical Society at Iowa City, in the year 1857, had the effect to inspire a belief that that organization was taking adequate care of this important interest. Such a result, however, was an impossibility, for the society was destitute of the necessary funds. True, the organization has been kept up until now. The members, individually, have done everything in their power to increase the collections. * * * All that the members could do was done, but no such institution, thus meagerly supported, can attain the ends sought. Meantime, the years were rolling by. The early settlers of the State were rapidly disappearing, either by death or removal to other regions, and all their recollections of pioneer times were fading away. Their places were occupied by new comers, who could not reasonably be expected to take much interest or pride in the Iowa of early days, for the reason that they knew little about it, and little of its history had been preserved.

Waste of Materials. No complete collection of our early public documents was in existence, and but few of the pioneer newspapers had been preserved. Precious books, which will one of these days be worth their weight in gold, were so fading from public knowledge as in many cases to have become almost wholly forgotten. Our prehistoric pottery and stone implements were being gathered up and largely sent abroad to enrich the museums and collections of other states. Even the fossils secured by one of our geological surveys, and costly engraved plates for their illustration—paid for by the State—met the same fate. To see and study these fossils at this time necessitates a journey to an eastern city. They would today form a most valuable addition—these "type specimens"—to a collection in our own capitol; but no effort was ever made to keep them here or at any other place in Iowa. If Iowa owned them now, no proposition to part with them would be entertained by anybody. While our statesmen upon the rostrum boasted the absence of illiteracy in Iowa, and pointed with pride to the magnificent record of Iowa soldiers during the great civil war, it was continually pleaded that this State, free from debt, could not afford to collect the necessary data for her own history, nor preserve from waste the archæological treasures yielded by her own soil, or even mementos of our early settlers and soldiers. It is a fact not to be proud of—a strange anomaly—that so many of the public documents published by State authority prior to 1860 are not now in the capitol nor represented in any collection. Of many, not a single copy is known to be in existence, nor were the originals preserved in the offices whence they emanated. It is to stop this waste—to repair, as far as practicable, the losses which have already occurred, to build up collections incidental to such work, and contributing greatly to its usefulness and to the everyday instruction and enjoyment of the people, to save up precious materials which shall illustrate to future times the history of our own, that the efforts of the Historical Department have been devoted during the year and a half of its existence. That these are worthy ends no one, I believe, will at this day question.

Original Steps. The history of the origin of this effort may be briefly summarized as follows: In the year 1884, Mrs. Aldrich and I presented to

the State, through the Trustees of the State Library, a simple Autograph Collection, proposing if it should be placed in cases in the Library, and properly cared for, to make further additions to its contents, as well as to illustrate it with portraits of the celebrities represented, adding biographical data. This offer was accepted. In due time a case was made, and later on another, from funds appropriated to furnishing the edifice. But no one else was willing to undertake to arrange the materials in the cases. I was, therefore, compelled to come to Des Moines and do this work, or let the enterprise fail. We also continued to make additions to the Collection, both by purchase and solicitation. In 1888 the two cases were filled to overflowing, and two more were needed. The legislature that session put an item in the general appropriation bill, allowing $1,000 to be expended for the care and preservation of objects in literature, art and science, which should be presented to the State. Of this the sum of $900 was used in building two more cases.

Moral Support. But when the Pioneer Law Makers' Association held their second reunion, in the winter of 1890, the Collection was made the subject of commendatory resolutions, in which the legislature then in session, was earnestly requested to sustain the work. A committee from that body visited the two houses and presented the resolutions. As a result of this action a bill was passed by the unanimous vote of both branches of the General Assembly, appropriating $3,000 for this purpose, with a provision directing the collection of documents, papers, etc., "relating to the earlier days of our Territory and State." Upon its approval I was appointed by the trustees of the State Library to prosecute the work, with an allowance of $100 per month during the year 1890 and '91. I continued, therefore, to increase and strengthen the original collection, as well as to collect data for State history. I had no rooms at the time, and the accumulations were simply piled up in a corner. At the next meeting of the Pioneer Law Makers' Association this work was made the subject of a further appeal to the legislature Many of the leading newspapers of the State had commended it, urging the founding of a permanent Historical Department in the State House. Governor Larrabee spoke of our work very kindly in his biennial message of 1890, as also did Governor Boies in 1892.

First Legislation. As a result of this agitation a bill was introduced in the Senate by Col. C. H. Gatch of Polk county, providing for the establishment of a Historical Department, and making the original "Aldrich Collection" a part of the work. This bill passed the Senate by a unanimous vote, and the House by 67 yeas to 14 nays. It also provided for the appointment of a Curator, who should hold his office six years. The three lower southeast rooms in the capitol, originally designed for the State Historical Society, were set apart for this purpose. The work is placed under the authority of the eight Trustees of the Iowa State Library. At a meeting held for the purpose of organizing the Department, I was appointed Curator, and with the approval of the Trustees I appointed Hon. B. F. Gue as my assistant. The new rooms were opened on the first day of July, 1892.

* * * * * *

That the State should build up and fairly maintain a great Historical Museum, wherein should be secured as large collections as practicable in State and National history, literature, art, military relics and mementos, natural history, geology, archæology, numismatics, etc., as it is practicable to bring together, would seem to have become the settled belief of the people. Such an institution should be kept growing, for "a finished museum is a dead museum." *There is apparently no end to the amount of materials which may be readily obtained for this purpose. The great need is a place in which they can be safely kept and conveniently exhibited.*

In his leading editorial, Volume One, Number One, ANNALS OF IOWA, Third Series, Mr. Aldrich published the following:

A PRELIMINARY NOTE.

Historical Publications. In the field of historical collections and historical work our State has been very peculiarly situated. About the time of the removal of the Capital to Des Moines, a State Historical Society was organized at Iowa City, in the belief, no doubt, that it would flourish under the shadow of our great University. Possibly it might have done so to the extent that brilliant success has attended like efforts at the capitals of Wisconsin, Kansas and other Western States, but one single and simple element always necessary in every such undertaking was lacking. That there were brains enough and culture enough in the Iowa Historical Society to secure magnificent success, no man of information will for a moment

doubt. The only thing lacking was money adequate to its support and the fair and logical development of its aims. This was never granted by the Legislature. Why not, we will not now attempt to set forth. Suffice it to say, that "the sinews of war" were withheld. As a result of this lack of support the State Historical Society has only accomplished what the hard work, personal generosity and self-sacrifice of a few of its individual members, none of them wealthy, brought to pass. For this they deserve unstinted praise, for they kept alive that element of patriotism which manifests itself in seeking to preserve the annals, memories and personal relics and mementos of ancestors—those who laid the foundations of the State and later defended the integrity of the nation on bloody fields. Then, in their contributions and collections, more than any others—far more than those who enjoyed the emoluments of office—have they preserved nearly all of our early written and printed records now in existence. For these excellent and fruitful labors they deserve and should ever receive the gratitude of our State. So far as publications are concerned the record of these men is one to which those who come afterward can always point with pride.

THE ANNALS OF IOWA.

First Series. In 1863 they founded, and continued until 1875, *"The Annals of Iowa."* This was a quarterly magazine of distinguished merit, and within its pages may be found more facts relating to early Iowa than can now be gleaned from all other existing sources. Its contents were made up for the most part of the recollections of leading men who had borne a part in the transactions which their pens delineated or who had known the men and women of whose good deeds they therein made a record. The regular publication of this very excellent work was suspended in 1875, solely for lack of adequate support.

Second Series. It was, however, revived in 1882, by Rev. S. S. Howe, and continued until the close of 1884. Hon. A. R. Fulton, of this city, was associated with him in its editorial management in 1883-84. Typographically *"The Annals"* was a beautiful magazine. It was plainly but very neatly printed, and for the most part each number contained a fine steel portrait of some distinguished Iowa man. Volumes of this work have become very scarce and command high prices. Many of the numbers are now difficult to obtain. Some of them, indeed, are in demand at $5.00 each. As it looks now, the policy which cramped and finally let die so excellent a work is not to be commended. It is one, however, which quickly consigns its own authors to the oblivion in which they would bury the memories of all who have gone before. Finally, in the year 1885 a new publication, appearing quarterly and called the *"Iowa Historical Record,"* was projected by the Historical Society. It is carefully edited by Dr. Frederick Lloyd, and is a publication which eminently deserved a remunerative support. Each number contains fifty pages, and is illustrated with a portrait of some distinguished Iowan. But its outside support is unfortunately most meager and the State has done very little to keep it in existence.

But while pecuniary support must be had to insure the development and continuance alike of historical magazines and historical collections anywhere, it would seem that this can be secured more easily and naturally at the Capital than at any other point. At Iowa City the great University constantly needs and demands appropriations. What it asks is really a necessity of the times and of our theories and systems of public education. But such large demands in one direction tend almost invariably to silence those in every other. This we believe to have been the prime reason why the State has not adequately supported the State Historical Society and its meritorious work. It is a result of circumstances and not one to call for the censure of any man or men. We believe no one will deny that the Capital is the proper place for a historical collection. People are daily arriving here from all parts of our State. They naturally expect to see a great library, works of art throughout the edifice, collections illustrating our growth and progress, relics and mementos of our pioneers and the heroes and heroines of all our wars. Nothing more delights the average tax-payer than a magnificent Capitol building well filled with collections in these various directions. Evidence of this is a matter of every-day occurrence.

* * * * * *

Third Series. Offers of "Our Publications in Exchange for Yours," are constantly coming to the Historical Department of Iowa; and unless some work like this should be promptly issued the State would be in the end greatly the loser. Through its pages, and by reason of its influence under proper management, it is believed that additions in value far exceeding its cost can be easily and regularly secured. These views were presented to

the Board of Trustees at the last meeting. That body by a unanimous vote decided that this effort should be made, and the first number is now before the reader.

NAME—"ANNALS OF IOWA."

It was, however, deemed judicious to retain the name, "ANNALS OF IOWA," and accordingly the right to use it was secured from the owner of the copyright at Iowa City. In reviving the publication it will be our aim not only to fill its pages with the best articles we can obtain upon all topics of Iowa history, but to render it as useful as possible in building up the Department of History now in the first year of its organization in our Capitol. We enter upon this work with much misgiving—with the deepest regret that this work had not been commenced under able and zealous management forty years ago—but with the determination to make our labors as valuable as possible to the State.

Mr. Aldrich, who was born at Ellington, New York, October 2, 1828, and died at Boone, Iowa, March 8, 1908, was a practical printer and a scholar. He spent his entire active life prior to his founding of the Historical Department, as the editor and publisher of weekly newspapers. At the same time he studied and contributed articles to journals and magazines upon literature, history, natural history and other topics.

The institution he founded grew while he yet lived, even beyond his own expectations, and was housed in quarters and given equipment he had implored the General Assembly to provide, at a cost of nearly a half million dollars. The collections, including his own magnificent gifts, have a value far beyond this princely amount.

In conducting the ANNALS OF IOWA, Mr. Aldrich suggested titles to many of his contributors and in the case of many others, rendered various services. The most accurate and trustworthy writers have been by him gently but firmly challenged and often corrected both in fact and in language. Until his health failed, not a word or line passed to the printer without his approval and no form was locked without his O. K.

Miss Mary R. Whitcomb became Assistant Curator in 1894, and placed her loyal spirit, finished education and marvelous industry wholly under the direction and influence of Mr. Aldrich. The merit of the journal varied little if any when its editor in his later years found it at times impossible to execute to his own satisfaction the exacting editorial demands of his strong will. Thus he collected and published for sixteen years in accordance with his plan, bringing into imperishable form and within the reach of all a mass of indispensable data upon Iowa history. What labor and pains it cost, the public will never know. But it is clear that in exchange returns, in the editorial comment, in the nearly eight hundred articles and four hundred illustrations, the people of the State received the most

from Charles Aldrich during his lifetime it had yet received from any man.

THE INDEX.

During his last year Mr. Aldrich planned as the valedictory effort of his literary life, an index to what he deemed his crowning work, *his* ANNALS OF IOWA. The ideas of Mr. Aldrich and of Miss Whitcomb for an index were gathered together by Miss Alice M. Steele, Assistant Curator, and some preliminary work was done by her. Notwithstanding the occurrence of the death of Mr. Aldrich, the expansion of the collections throughout the new Historical Building into four times the space they had previously occupied, and the death of Miss Whitcomb all within thirteen months, Miss Steele nevertheless advanced the index. Following the death of Miss Whitcomb the work of Mr. Aldrich and Miss Whitcomb was divided between Miss Steele and the writer, who had been appointed Assistant Curator in the spring of 1907 and had assumed the responsibility of management on March 14, 1908, under a resolution of the Board of Trustees, as follows:

Moved that in view of the death of Curator Charles Aldrich that the Historical Department of the State Library and of the Museum, the Art Gallery, the newspapers and the historical periodicals, be placed in charge of Mr. E. R. Harlan, the assistant to the Curator, during the pleasure of the Board and until the vacancy in the office is filled with all the powers granted by law to the Curator of the Museum and Art Gallery.

Miss Steele labored valiantly the while with the Index compilation and, in addition to her other onerous duties, had finished volumes one to seven when she retired from the work in November, 1910, the unfinished compiling and the "small editing" being assigned to Miss Alice Marple, whose labors with the staff began upon the retirement of Miss Steele and continue to the present time.

The work is issued by direction of the Board of Trustees for the joint purpose of commemorating the life of Mr. Aldrich and of conferring upon the general public the benefit of an adequate and accurate index to his invaluable labors.

EDGAR R. HARLAN,
Curator.

EXPLANATORY

The index proper includes authors, subjects and titles.
Index of illustrations follows the general index.
Titles of books and articles have principal words capitalized.
The volume number is black face.
The page number is six point Roman.

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